

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

APRIL 1993

ONE DOLLAR



VIRGINIA WILDLIFE



VOLUME 54

Commonwealth of Virginia
Lawrence Douglas Wilder,
Governor

HUNTING & FISHING
LICENSE FEES

Subsided this publication

Department of Game and
Inland Fisheries

Bud Bristow, Director

Larry G. Hart, Assistant Director

Members of the Board

R. Leon McFillen, McLean

Chairman

Walter P. Conrad, Jr., Chesapeake

Vice chairman

Omar W. Ball, Powhatan

Roger S. Buyn, Cheriton

Thomas A. Cash, Cedar Bluff

Lewis M. Costello, Winchester

Dr. Laurence R. Jahn, Vienna

Amanda T. Macaulay, Richmond

Elsa A. Porter, Alexandria

Gerald J. Spates, Farmville

Leon O. Turner, Roanoke

Magazine Staff

Virginia Shepherd, Editor

Mel White, Senior Editor

Emily Pels, Art Director

Carol Kushlak, Composition Editor

Staff Contributors: William Antozzi, Rick

Eades, Roy Edwards, Sonja Taylor, Larry

Mohn

Color separations and printing by Carter
Printing, Richmond, Virginia.

Virginia Wildlife (ISSN 0042 6792) is published
monthly by the Public Relations and Resource
Education Division of the Virginia Department of
Game and Inland Fisheries, Box 11104, 4010 West
Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104.
Second class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Virginia
Wildlife, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia
23230-1104.

Subscription department: 804/367-1000. Domestic
and foreign rates: six months, \$5.00; one year,
\$10.00; three years, \$24.00; back issues \$1.00 each
subject to availability.

Submission guidelines available upon request. The
Department accepts no responsibility for unsolicited
manuscripts, photographs or artwork. Permission to
reprint material from Virginia Wildlife must be
obtained from the writer, artist or photographer as
well as the editor.

Observations, conclusions and opinions expressed in
Virginia Wildlife are those of the authors and do not
necessarily reflect those of the members or staff of the
Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

©1993 Virginia Department of Game and Inland
Fisheries

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries shall
afford to all persons an equal access to Department
programs and facilities without regard to race, color,
religion, national origin, disability, sex or age. If you
believe that you have been discriminated against in
any program, activity or facility, please write to:
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries,
ATTN: Compliance Officer, 4010 West Broad Street,
P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104.

Cover: Spring is busting out all over Virginia. Watch
for our native orchid, the pink ladyslipper, to begin
flowering this month; photo by Tim Black.

Features

4 **Training in the Heavens** by A. Lee Chichester
With a hawk or falcon as a hunting companion, the
lines between heaven and earth, wild and tame, are
often blurred.

10 **Fishing the Rivanna** by Harry Murray
Virginia's first scenic river is a must for float fishermen
this spring.

14 **1992 Anglers Hall of Fame**

16 **A Special Delivery** by Claire L. Powell
One person's mailbox is another bird's home.

17 **Nottoway River Float Trips**

20 **Make Room for Crappies** by Gerald Almy
Your fishing plans for April may be filling up fast, but
leave some time open to fish for spawning crappies.

25 **Fooling Toms** by Gerald Almy
Have you run out of ways to lure a wary gobbler into
range this season? Here are some new ideas to fill up
your bag of tricks.

April Journal

28 Journal

31 Outdoor Almanac

32 Recipes

33 Photo Tips

34 Safety

Left: Spring gobbler season runs from April 17 through May 22
statewide. Learn some new tactics to pack along with your calls this
spring—see page 25 for details; photo by Bill Lea.

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife
and Natural Resources



Tra

The sport of falconry requires years of dedication, patience, and understanding. With a hawk or falcon as a hunting companion, the lines between heaven and earth, wild and tame, are often blurred.

by A. Lee Chichester

It was a miserable day for a falconry demonstration. Gray and drizzly, the weather forced the gathering into the gym of the Floyd County High School. After a brief talk about falconry, Chris Harr, a licensed Abingdon falconer and his red-tailed hawk, Gladwing, tried to show the group a bit of the sport: the call to the fist. Chris released his hold on the jesses of the bird, and Gladwing flew into the gym rafters to perch, much as any red-tail would fly into a tree to survey its hunting grounds in the wild.

But on this day, Gladwing saw nothing below to inspire further flight. In fact, the crowd, the acoustics, and the glare of the artificial lighting convinced the bird that it already had the best of all options available. It stayed perched.

Chris' efforts to get Gladwing to do his bidding before the expectant crowd were futile. Although falconer and bird had worked together for three years, and the call to the fist is the first of all the steps along the road to hunting in partnership with a raptor, this red-tail refused to acknowl-

edge that it knew anything about falconry or its handler.

To the assembled crowd, something that Chris had said in his opening remarks became quite clear: A captive raptor used in the sport of falconry is not tamed or domesticated in the way

mans isn't justified by the end product. For others, however, falconry is the perfect way to get intimate with raw nature. Interactions with raptors teeter on a very thin edge between "tame" and "wild."

Falconry is the perfect sport for folks like Chris. For him, the fascination with wild raptors began at age 17. "My family was walking along a path to a cabin when a hawk came pelting out of the sky and nailed a rabbit," he explains. "I knew right then that I had to find some way to get closer to that, so I could experience that thrill again."

Chris was lucky enough to have seen something rarely witnessed by humans: the stoop, or the high-powered skydive for prey by a skilled predator of the air. Nearly anyone who witnesses such an event is drawn to know more about raptors.

In Chris' case, he started reading everything he could about raptors. "I was reluctant to just have one of

about it, it would be on the evening news."

In fact, the sport in Virginia has a somewhat limited following. The state's falconry organization, the 10-year-old Virginia Falconry Association (VFA), has 40 members. Most are Virginians, but some are from Maryland and Pennsylvania, according to the organization's past president, John Neviser. "About a dozen to maybe 15 of that number are practicing falconers," he says. "Some members are between birds, some are just interested in the sport and haven't the time or facilities to actively participate."

To help spur interest in and understanding of the sport, the VFA offers clinics for members and the public, and works with the state to refine regulations. Some members, like Chris, give talks and demonstrations to achieve the same goals.

Back at that uneventful falconry demonstration in the Floyd High School gym, Chris never had any doubts that Gladwing would deign to come down from the rafters. He

ining in the Heavens

a dog, cat, or even a parrot can be. And while a falconer must spend many weeks training a bird, the process has a different result than that seen by trainers of hunting dogs. While a well-trained dog is normally devoted to its handler, a falconry hawk develops no such bond with humans. Additionally, a good hunting dog rarely forgets what it has been trained to do, but a raptor will revert back to its wild state if not constantly handled.

This singular aspect of the relationship between bird and falconer is what turns many people off from making the necessary commitment to falconry. To some, the tremendous amount of time and effort which must be expended to simply maintain a wild raptor's tolerance for hu-

these birds as a pet," he says, "like you'd keep a parrot or something. I figured there had to be more to it, and I began asking questions and reading books until I stumbled on a sport called falconry. I was so excited—I couldn't figure out why everyone wasn't talking about this incredible sport. I was sure that if anyone knew

Opposite page: Red-tailed hawk illustration by Patricia Widdon.

Right: Falconer Chris Harr spends years "training" a single red-tailed hawk to become a hunting partner in the field; photo by Page Chichester.



merely had to wait (four hours, it turned out) until the bird felt secure enough, hungry enough, and trusting enough to leave the safety of its high perch.

If, however, the bird had been outside and had refused to obey the call to the fist, Chris' anxiety would have increased exponentially. In that case, it would have been no real surprise to see the bird wing away in answer to some call of the wild. But with Chris' experience, if the danger of Gladwing not returning under normal circumstances had been a factor, he never would have flown the bird outside. Long-time falconers know that the loss of a bird is almost always the fault of the handler, not the bird.

There are many reasons why the falconry season in Virginia extends only from fall to the end of winter, and the risk of raptor loss is one of them. In the spring and summer, the fast-rising warmed air which creates columns called thermals are often just too tempting for a soaring bird to resist. Once in a thermal, a bird can travel hundreds of miles in a very short time.

The longer daylight hours and warmth of spring also trigger the moult, when birds drop major wing and tail feathers in preparation for new ones to grow. Falconers fatten up their birds in summer to ensure a new crop of healthy, strong feathers. The problem with fattening up a raptor is that a fat bird has no reason to hunt. And if a raptor has no reason to hunt, it will have no use for its handler. In falconry, a fat bird is most often a lost bird.

In most cases, it is the apprentice falconer whose inexperience contributes to a captive raptor inadvertently becoming once again a wild raptor. Insufficient attention to details such as the daily weighing-in of a bird could lead to the premature



end of the falconry relationship.

The long road from an apprentice falconer's license to a general or master class falconer's license is a difficult one, sometimes fraught with frustrations tracking the limits of human patience. The falconer must have specific knowledge to deal with



everything from broken feathers to broken wings; from a constantly screeching bird to protecting one from predators.

The equipment necessary for practicing falconry is involved and sport-specific—the new falconer won't find bits of other sporting





Clockwise from left:

Falconry demands total dedication to the sport and the needs of raptors, and requires a two-year apprenticeship under a master falconer before one can qualify for a general falconer's license; photo by Page Chichester.

A falconer's bird is always hooded while at rest to calm the raptor. The peregrine falcon hybrid pictured here is not an uncommon bird in falconry circles. In fact, the captive-raised stock of falconers helped to make possible the reintroduction of peregrines into the wild after they had been decimated by the effects of DDT in the 1970s; photo by Craig Koppie.

A red-tailed hawk is caught by the camera lens as it makes its way back to its trainer's glove; photo by Page Chichester.

A male peregrine falcon hybrid is shown above feeding on a pigeon—a favorite prey item; photo by Tim Wright.

equipment that he can "make do" for falconry. And because mail-ordered equipment takes time, falconers often learn how to make their own "furniture," the term for falconry gear.

The history, techniques, and conventions of sport falconry can be learned from books. But, as in other pursuits, experience is the best teacher. (It only takes one electrocuted bird for an apprentice falconer to learn never to fly his bird near overhead power lines, no matter how good the game below may be.)

The many aspects of equipping and maintaining a bird can be daunt-

ing. But it is the hunt itself that draws fans to falconry. Typically, wild red-tails find a tall tree from which they can survey a large area for game movements. Relying on natural behavior throughout the training and handling of sport hawks, the falconer begins each hunt by encouraging his charge to take a high perch and watch. The handler then walks along below, using a stick to beat likely rabbit lodgings. Through practice, the bird knows that if it stays high, close to its handler, and alert, a reward is bound to dart from the brambles into its flight path.

For the falconer, there's nothing so exciting: First, the startling flush — then a brown blur rockets past and crashes into the brush. Did the bird win or did the rabbit? As in nature, the odds are about even. The bird gets only one chance per flush—it commits all its concentration and skill into becoming a predatory missile. If unsuccessful, the bird can regain a perch and try again for another rabbit, or for the same one if the falconer can flush it again.

It is not unusual for the bird to direct the course of the hunt. With a raptor's incredible eyesight and its superior positioning, it can often detect prey in a different direction altogether from the path the falconer has chosen. By listening for the sound of the falconry bells attached either high on the bird's tail feathers or around its legs, the falconer can follow the bird and take his cue from his partner's instinctive hunting skill.

Historically, falcons hunted to provide food for their handlers. In modern falconry, however, a bird hunts for itself. If his bird makes a kill, Chris allows it to feed for several minutes. But then the raptor is taken off its kill through trickery. Chris throws a rag over the fresh rabbit, distracting the bird's attention from it, and offers instead an older, smaller morsel—a haunch or a foreleg from a previous kill. "Even with its talons in the rabbit," Chris says, "if the bird can't see it, it doesn't know the rabbit's there. Once it starts feeding, a red-tail doesn't know the difference between new meat and old."

The purpose of the deception is twofold. Chris gets the bird off its fresh kill so it doesn't overfeed, which could lead to sluggishness or the dreaded premature loss of a fat bird. Secondly, Chris is able to put the remainder of the rabbit in the freezer for backup food. If the bird should have an unsuccessful outing, or if the weather is too miserable for man or beast to venture into, the bird still needs nourishment. A reserve of natural food is essential for the raptor's health.

Through his seven years of active falconry, Chris has handled many birds, all of them red-tails. This species' prevalence makes it a popular choice for falconers in Virginia. Still, some falconers with "general" or "master" level permits enjoy working with the non-native, captive-bred Harris' hawk.

"Breeding programs are so sophisticated here today," says John Neviser, "that it's relatively easy for a falconer to buy a non-native bird which was domestically bred. While the red-tailed hawk is used the most by VFA members because of its availability, the Harris' hawk, a South-

western bird, is very popular."

To a falconer who has purchased a bird, its loss or reversion to a wild state is not just an emotional upheaval or a setback—it's a financial loss. But for Chris, whose preference is for the native red-tails, the tendency for captive raptors to revert is a bonus. Chris has a policy of releasing his birds after he has enjoyed several years of hunting in concert with them.

In fact, the morning before Gladwing so flagrantly disregarded his training in that high school gym, Chris had decided it was time to find a welcoming spot in which to release Gladwing. The bird was healthy, of breeding age, and a skillful hunter. During his opening remarks that day, Chris asked to speak with any in his audience who had land suitable for red-tail habitat.

Release is a tough policy for Chris to follow. By the end of three or four hunting seasons, bird and handler know each other's traits and habits. Starting over with a fresh, immature bird is both exciting and intimidating after the experience of a comfortable working partnership.

But for Chris, a committed conservationist, the release is part of the fascination of the sport. Strictly speaking, a falconer can *own* a raptor just to the extent that humans can own any piece of nature. And it's important to Chris that his direct contact with nature is low-impact and non-damaging, leaving the wild to remain wild.

So, on that gray, drizzly day, Chris walked with Gladwing up to the top of a brushy, Floyd County hill, removed the bird's jesses and leash, and said goodbye to his own version of the ideal human/animal relationship. □

A. Lee Chichester is a freelance writer who is also an apprentice falconer. She lives in Meadows of Dan, VA.





Although red-tailed hawks (*opposite left*, photo by Page Cluchester) are popular choices for falconers, the Harris' hawk (a Southwestern species) featured *opposite top left* (adult) and *above* (immature), and the Northern goshawk (*top*, female pictured on a rabbit hunt with falconer Anthony Meyer) are also magnificent hunting companions. Photos by Craig Koppie.

So You Want to Be A Falconer...

The licensing process for a person getting into falconry is somewhat rigorous—merely transporting a captive-bred or wild bird demands proper authorization. The requirements are in place to help limit the black market trade in threatened and endangered birds.

For the first two years in the sport, a new falconer must have a patron, or a sponsor. As in trade guilds of the past, an "apprentice" falconer must have a "master" (or "general" permittee) to teach him or her, and to assure that the raptor is not mishandled. The new falconer must also pay a fee, take a test administered by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and undergo an inspection of facilities and equipment by a state official before any bird can be captured. There are also strict rules about what kinds and at what age raptors can be taken from the wild, and any captive raptor must be banded with a "marker" obtained from

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service immediately upon capture. The unlicensed handling of any protected bird carries with it severe federal penalties.

For more information on falconry, contact:

Don Schwab, Falconry Coordinator
Virginia Department of Game
and Inland Fisheries
P.O. Box 847
Suffolk, VA 23434

Timothy Ettridge,
Secretary/Treasurer
Virginia Falconry Association
(1-year membership, \$15.00)
3303 Fox Mill Rd.
Oakton, VA 22124

Mark Schriver, President
Virginia Falconry Association
13719 Berkley Davis Dr.
Chesterfield, VA 23832



Fishing the Rivanna

Virginia's First Scenic River

by Bob Gooch

Jim cast to the near bank and worked his small Rapala rapidly to make it run deep. Canoe paddle in hand, I watched. Suddenly, he flicked his wrist sharply upward.

"Fish?"

"Afraid not. Just snagged."

"Hang on," I responded as I dug the paddle into the clear river water and sent my battered canoe in the direction of his snagged lure. Hang-ups are frequent if you fish the Rivanna River properly.

As the canoe swung into a quiet eddy below the snag and Jim reached for his lure, a swirl of water downstream from the stern of the craft caught my eye. Then a minnow

leaped. I grabbed my light spinning rod and made a quick cast to the commotion. Wham! I was rewarded with a solid strike. Startled, Jim turned to see a nice largemouth bass crack the surface with my lure flashing in its mouth.

That's Rivanna River fishing. Grab bag fishing. You never know what's going to hit your lure next. And even when you get a fish on, you're often not sure what it is until you get it to the boat.

Sure, there are many Virginia streams that offer this kind of fishing. But the Rivanna is the most convenient to my Fluvanna County home. I fish it often, and it seldom lets me

down. Steeped in history, the Rivanna is a mother lode for those who like to probe into Virginia's rich past. The name Rivanna is an abbreviation for River Anna—after the queen of England. As early as 1763, Thomas Jefferson recognized the potential of the stream as a solution to transportation problems faced by early Americans. This led eventually to the Rivanna Navigation Company and the construction of aqueducts, canal, locks, and a tow path for teams of horses towing barges up the river to Charlottesville. Remnants of this early transportation system are still there for historians to enjoy.

The Rivanna is a major tributary of the James River and the most accessible one, thanks to a series of access points provided by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the County of Albemarle. Its natural beauty plus its rich history led the General Assembly to designate the Rivanna as the state's first official scenic river under the Scenic Rivers Act of 1970.

The river forms in Albemarle County and flows through Fluvanna to join the mother river at Columbia. It is considered a public waterway upstream to the Greene County line. Its own major tributaries are the North and South Forks of the Rivanna which join near Charlottesville to form the main stem, and Ballingers, Buck Island, Judy, Mechunk, and Raccoon Creeks.

The South Fork of the Rivanna Reservoir, part of the Charlottesville water supply system, is the major impoundment on the river system, although there is an old Woolen Mills dam near Charlottesville that blocks canoeists and float fishermen.

Fishing in the numerous tributaries can also be good, but that is another story. So is the South Fork of the Rivanna Reservoir.

Public access begins upstream with a canoe or light boat launching area in Albemarle County near Milton. This is an old roadbed that the county retained ownership of in order to provide public access to the river. Parking is limited and getting a boat or canoe on the river means dragging it about 50 yards. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries access point at Crofton Bridge is the next one downstream. When the river is flowing reasonably strong, this stretch can be traveled by canoe in four or five hours, but this allows little time for fishing. Plan on a long day for good fishing, and even then you'll find yourself passing up some promising water as the sun threatens to disappear behind the wooded bluffs.

From Crofton Bridge downstream, the next access point is the Department launching site at Palmyra, the shortest stretch between access points. You can spend a

comfortable day fishing this section of the river, and it probably gets the most fishing pressure.

From Palmyra to Columbia is another long day of fishing, probably longer than the Milton to Crofton Bridge section. The access point at Columbia is actually on the south side of the James River, a short distance downstream from the mouth of the Rivanna. Reaching it from the Rivanna means crossing the James.

Shorter float fishing trips are possible, but it means getting permission from landowners or using public highway crossings. There are several crossings between Palmyra and Columbia, but in most instances it's best even then to get the permission of the adjoining landowner. Highway right-of-ways are not particularly spacious. Upstream from Milton the only access is informal—highway crossings or the generosity of landowners along the river.

To many anglers, the Rivanna is a smallmouth bass stream. For them fishing begins and ends with the bronzeback. The Rivanna is a good smallmouth stream, but the James is a better one—and possibly some of the other James River tributaries might have a slight edge also. It matters little. You can catch some nice

brown bass in the Rivanna, though you'll catch more big ones in the James. Not that there aren't some big bass in the Rivanna. My personal record is a 4-pounder, but I've caught several in that class. The slot limit that applies to James River bass is not applicable to the Rivanna, and you'll catch lots of bass in the 10-inch class. A limit of five is not hard to come by, but most of them will be small. Many Rivanna River anglers practice a catch-and-release ethic—releasing all of their catch unless they happen to hook up with a trophy fish.

I hesitate to even attempt to name the best section of the river for smallmouth bass. The fish are found throughout the long river system and up many of its tributaries. My favorite water is that between Milton and Crofton Bridge, but it's probably because I just like that stretch of water. One popular section is the several hundred yards of stream just up the river from the Crofton Bridge landing. Many anglers wade here, entering the river at Crofton Bridge.

Smallmouth bass can be caught just about all year-round in the Rivanna River, but May through October are the most popular months. The spring months are good, but the water is more likely to be badly colored then. I like July and August when the river is more stable—except in dry years when the flow is low. The fishing can still be good then, but canoeing or floating the river in a johnboat is difficult. The same is true of September and October, except that the cool nights of September seem to turn the fish on. Some of my most memorable trips have been after Labor Day.

For every smallmouth bass the Rivanna River angler catches, he or she will catch a dozen redbreast sunfish. These colorful little fish hit hard and readily—and often on the more popular bass lures. I usually take some time on every trip to fish just for the sunfish. They're fun to catch and tasty on the table. In fact, anglers who want to take home some table fish often take sunfish only. They're abundant in the river, and can take the pressure. Smaller lures such as grubs, spinners, and spoons will take

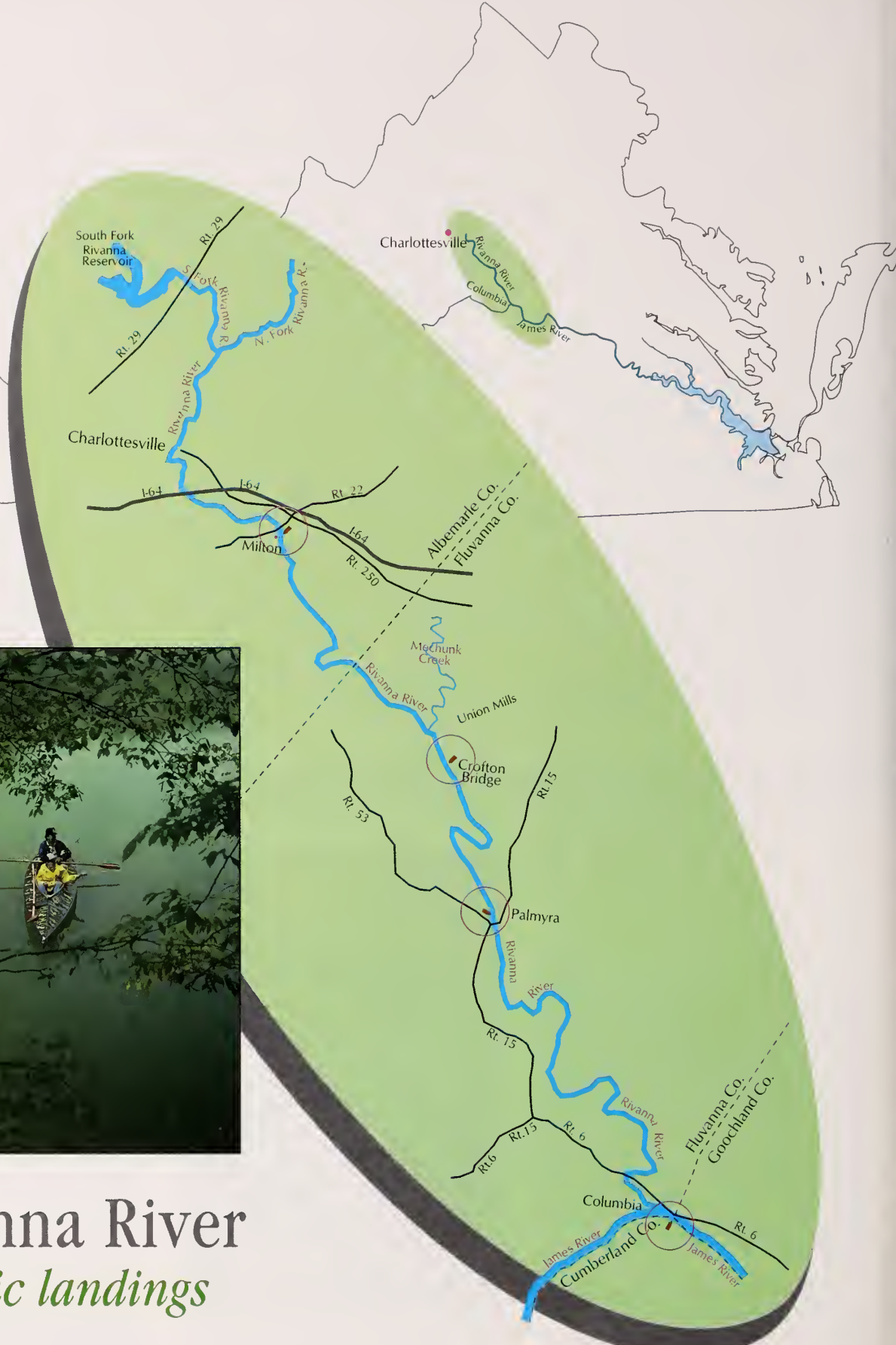


Opposite and above: The Rivanna River is a perfect river to float, especially with a rod and reel in hand; photos by Soc Clay.



Rivanna River

public landings



just about all the sunnies the average angler wants to clean. The little fish is not persnickety about lures. Just remember they have small mouths—though not as small as those of the bluegill.

Smallmouth bass and redbreast sunfish are native to the stream insofar as natural reproduction goes. The smallmouth, of course, came to Virginia from the Ohio River System many years ago, but it is at home in many Virginia streams today. The Rivanna River angler will also catch some bluegills and a few crappie, though I feel the bluegills are more abundant. You won't catch either in the fast water preferred by the redbreast sunfish and the smallmouth, however. Both prefer the quieter water behind log jams, the back eddies, and the deep dark pools. I rarely pass up an opportunity to cast to such water. I like the variety it offers.

That same kind of quiet water may also hold some largemouth bass. Neither the bigmouths, bluegills, nor crappies reproduce in the river to the extent that the smallmouth and sunnies do, however. Most drift in from farm ponds or other impoundments during periods of high water. The South Fork Rivanna Reservoir, for example, is noted for its crappie fishing. Many of those fish escape over the dam and move downstream.

One of my favorite fish is the chain pickerel, a hardy customer that is about as native as a fish can get in a Virginia stream. Most of the tributaries that feed into the Rivanna River hold good pickerel—and so do the tributaries of the tributaries.

One bright spring day my late father and I were fishing the river just above the Crofton Bridge access point. We had launched a light johnboat, clamped on a little 3 1/2-power outboard and made a run as far up the river as the fast water would permit. It made a nice afternoon of fishing as we drifted back toward the access point. Just below the confluence of Mechunk Creek I cast to a streamside jumble of debris and got a solid strike. I soon recognized it as a good pickerel. I worked the fish to the net and as I did Pop made a cast to the

same point and caught its mate. You don't catch many pickerel in the Rivanna River. It's far from ideal pickerel habitat, but you score often enough that the possibility is always there as you fish it for bass and sunnies.

Cattfish anglers do well in the Rivanna River, mostly fishing at night or when the water is muddy following a good rain. Most are channel cats, of course, and good fish. Another partner and I were floating the section between Crofton and Palmyra one day casting for smallmouths. He made a cast to some fast water, got a solid strike and began working a stubborn fish to the boat. What we expected to be a chunky bronzeback

They may get out there as early as February if the weather is right.

There is also the occasional gar, though few anglers bother with the long-snouted critters.

The Rivanna is not a white-water canoeist's dream. There are some good rapids that will give you a fast ride, but anglers like to anchor in them if possible and cast. Smallmouth bass love those rapids. An old navigation dam at what was once Union Mills might well provide the most dangerous water. I approach it with caution and pick my route carefully. It might rate Class III, though an expert canoeist could argue the point. There are some good rooster-tails as you come out of it, and I al-



Many anglers enjoy wading into the Rivanna from the Crofton Bridge landing and fishing upstream. For canoeists, a full day of float fishing can be had from Crofton Bridge to the Palmyra landing, and from Milton to Crofton Bridge; photos opposite and above by Soc Clay.

turned out to be a lunker channel cat. Channel cats on the prowl don't hesitate to hit deep-running lures. They add an additional ingredient to a Rivanna River smallmouth bass fishing trip.

There are carp, of course, for those who want to fish for them. And the spring sucker run always attracts those who have the patience and finesse to catch these finicky feeders. Sucker anglers on the Rivanna River banks are a sign of spring.

ways breathe a sigh of relief when I come safely through—as I always have.

That's the Rivanna River, loaded with history, picturesque and fun to fish. It's Virginia's first official scenic river, and one of many fine Virginia streams. □

Bob Gooch is a freelance writer, and the author of many hunting and fishing books. He lives in Troy, Virginia.



Above: Photo by Soc Clay. Right: Patch photo by Lee Walker.

Below is a list of the anglers reaching Master and Expert status in the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Freshwater Fish Citation Program from January to December 1992. Congratulations to the best anglers in Virginia!

Master angler: Each angler listed has caught 5 citation fish, each of a different species.

Expert Angler: Each angler listed has caught 10 citation fish of the same species.

Citation Sizes:

Bass, Largemouth 8 lbs.
 Smallmouth 5 lbs.
 Striped 20 lbs.
 White 2 lbs., 8 oz.

Rock 1 lb.
 Bowfin 10 lbs.
 Catfish, Channel 12 lbs.
 Flathead 25 lbs.
 Blue 20 lbs.
 Carp 20 lbs.
 Chain pickerel 4 lbs.
 Crappie 2 lbs.
 Gar 10 lbs.
 Muskellunge 15 lbs.
 Northern Pike 6 lbs.
 Perch, Yellow 1 lb., 4 oz.
 White 1 lb., 4 oz.
 Sunfish 1 lb.
 Trout, Brook 2 lbs.
 Brown 5 lbs.
 Rainbow 4 lbs.
 Walleye 5 lbs.

Masters

Atkins, Jr., Edward	Hanover
Barto, Kenneth	Virginia Beach
Brooks, Kellam	Port Royal
Brooks, Brian	Colonial Heights
Bucker, Bernard	Sandston
Byrd, Dickie	Martinsville
Carr, III, Charles	Suffolk
Carter, Glenn	Richmond
Chenault, R.	Richmond
Chittum, J.	Covington
Clark, Richard	Boydton
Cline, Dale	Wytheville
Davidson, Sr., Charles	Dublin
Gardner, Faron	Hillsville
Glenn, Sr., Kenneth	Richmond
Gray, Larry	Hopewell

Hall, Alvin	Bassett	Ashby, Randy	Martinsville	Knighton, Gene	Virginia Beach
Hall, John	Floyd	Berkley, Al	Brookneal	Lang, Jr., Joseph	Virginia Beach
Hamilton, Walter	Stuarts Draft	Blackard, Donald	Stuart	Martin, Melvin	King Williams Ch.
Herring, Jr., L.	Suffolk	Bradshaw, T.	Portsmouth	McBride, Gary	Eden
Humphreys, Woody	Vinton	Brannock, David	Norlina	McDaniel, Michael	Richmond
Jessie, William	Pulaski	Breen, Billy	Newport	McDonald, Thomas	Williamsburg
Keith, Gregory	Buchanan	Bryant, Ernie	Lacrosse	Meyer, Bruce	Virginia Beach
Kelley, Sr., Robert	Mechanicsville	Bures, Allen	Radford	Nash, Kenneth	Mechanicsville
Keyser, Kenneth	Covington	Butler, Thomas	Chesapeake	Newhart, Donald	Virginia Beach
King, Jr., Sterlin	Chesapeake	Caldwell, Harvey	Virginia Beach	Pickenpaugh, Richard	Powhatan
Kline, Stephen	Richmond	Clark, Richard	Boydton	Pitts, Donald	Corbin
Knauer, Carl	Virginia Beach	Clarkson, Larry	Newport News	Presley, Roger	Thaxton
Lang, III, Joseph	Virginia Beach	Cline, Dale	Wytheville	Presley, Anita	Crewe
Lockhart, II, Linwood	Richmond	Cobb, Warren	Franklin	Rice, Annette	Suffolk
Manuel, Donald	Woodlawn	Cole, Jeff	Troutville	Rickman, Shawn	Red Oak
Martin, Ross	King William	Cook, Roy	Richmond	Roberts, William	Madison
Martin, Joseph	Christiansburg	Cooke, Elridge	Covington	Rose, Buddy	South Boston
Morgan, Catfish	Fredericksburg	Daniel, Robert	Roanoke	Rose, Pete	Suffolk
Perry, Jr., T.	Chesapeake				
Presley, Kenneth	Crewe				
Prosser, Michael	Roanoke				

Anglers

1992 Hall of Fame



Rhoten, Wayne	Powhatan	Denton, Bubba	Richmond	Salmon, III, Thomas	Ivor
Rose, Buddy	South Boston	Downs, Jerry	Vesuvius	Sanders, Douglas	King George
Ruyon, Sr., Kenneth	Suffolk	Dunaway, Edward	Richmond	Skidmore, James	Covington
Santerre, Gregory	Glen Allen	Dunn, Rory	Madison Heights	Smith, Mike	Falmouth
Sharp, III, Garland	Richmond	Falls, Richard	Suffolk	Smith, Nelson	Woodford
Stevens, Christopher	Pembroke	Faris, Jr., Charles	Richmond	Smith, Jr., Thomas	Woodford
Townsend, John	Keysville	Farlow, Michael	Chester	Smithwick, Billy	Gordonsville
Whittaker, Michael	Chesapeake	Gentry, John	Portsmouth	Spicer, Timmy	Narrows
Wilson, Danny	Big Island	Gill, Roger	Richmond	Stewart, William	Midlothian
Wilson, David	Brodnax	Gillispie, Jr., R.	Eden	Story, Carroll	Franklin
Winckler, Robert	Palmer Springs	Gray, Jr., James	Daleville	Taylor, Stephen	Lanexa
Woods, David	Virginia Beach	Hall, Darryle	Richmond	Thorpe, Jr., James	Waverly
		Hancock, Marvin	Boones Mill	Tibbs, Roger	Rural Retreat
		Herring, Carl	Suffolk	Tyree, Jr., Emmett	Selma
		Hershberger, S.	Gum Springs	Vassar, James	South Boston
		Humphries, Loyd	Waynesboro	Welcher, Cecil	Bridgewater
		Hurst, Dennie	Shawsville	Whittaker, Michael	Chesapeake
		Jernigan, William	Richmond	Woods, David	Virginia Beach
		Jones, Michael	Portsmouth	Worrell, James M.	Suffolk
		Kania, Charles	Suffolk	Worrell, Sarah L.	Suffolk

Experts

Amos, Sr., Timothy	Richmond
Anthony, Calvin	Glen Allen
Arthur, Ellis	Baskerville

A Special Delivery

One person's mailbox is another bird's home...

by Claire L. Powell

The postmaster was using his most professional manner as he tried to calm the woman on the other side of the counter. I overheard the commotion as I was bundling up my mail and preparing to leave for my rounds as a rural mail carrier. Even though I was around the corner and out of sight, I had no doubt that the irate patron was one of my favorite boxholders: the little lady at 889-B. She was actually a very sweet lady, but she was a little particular about her mail service. She wanted her mail on time and delivered properly, and she would let you know if it wasn't. I do admit that once I had messed up and given her a neighbor's mail. And that's why she was sure that I was out to get her now.

"Someone else's mail was bad enough," she said. "But, sticks, leaves, and trash is getting outrageous! I really try to keep my place tidy, and I just don't appreciate that new carrier of yours playing these silly games with me. Why, I think she is committing a federal offense by leaving her trash in there everyday..."

When the smoke had cleared and the postmaster asked about my strange sense of humor, I assured him of my innocence and promised to investigate the matter further.

After delivering the mail for that day, I removed the "Caution—Frequent Stops" sign from my car and went "undercover." I parked on a hill overlooking the suspicious mailbox, took out my Peterson's Spy Manual, and prepared for long wait. As it turned out, it didn't take long to spot the culprit. She was dressed rather drably—maybe so that Mrs. 889-B wouldn't be too likely to notice her. But, she certainly did not try to hide her intentions as she boldly popped a twig into the mailbox and took off in search of another.

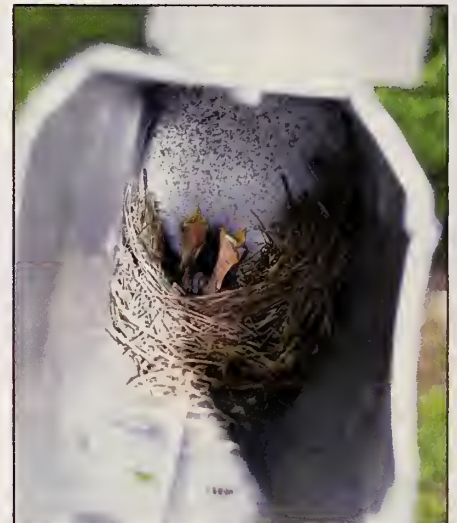
The box at 889-B had a bent door so that it did not close completely. The little gap at the top was just large enough for the wren to slip through with her twigs and leaves. It seemed like a perfect cavity to raise a family in, if she could just put up with those people who insisted on opening the door twice a day to put in scraps of paper and pull them out again. Everytime she got a good start on the nest, that ol' wrecking ball of a fist would appear and it would be time to rebuild. But, this wren was not one to back down easily. This cavity on its metal pedestal was safe from cats, dogs, owls, snakes, wind, rain, sleet, snow, and even dark of night. One little hand wasn't going to stop this bird!

Well, I'm happy to report that with a little plea bargaining we were able to keep our little federal offender from being run out of town. When the evidence was presented, Mrs. 889-B decided to withdraw her eviction notice and the two of them negotiated a policy of peaceful coexistence. The wren is now raising a family of five in the back of the box. Mrs. 889-B is careful to make sure that the gap in the door is always left open just enough for her new tenants to enter and exit at will. As for my part, I am careful to place the mail at the front of the box so that I don't bury the entire household.

Since that experience, I have noticed many other families setting up housekeeping on the mail route this spring. There are only seven boxes on the entire route that have bent or broken doors that would enable a bird to enter and exit at will. Of those seven, two are occupied by bluebird nests, one has a sparrow in residence, and of course, 889-B belongs to Mrs. Wren. Most of the time, the females will simply sit and blink at the sudden light as I fling the mail in front of

them and speed on my way. The birds seem to prefer the regular human intrusion to the risk of more ominous dangers that they might find in a natural cavity.

Or, perhaps there just are not enough natural cavities to go around anymore. As more people move out to the country, old and rotting cavity trees are cut down. Some people attempt to replace the old trees by planting new ones. However, many people are not even aware of the previous occupants they evicted with the buzz of the chainsaw. Thus, as we put up a newspaper box, leave a gap in that new wall, or raise those red flags on our mailboxes to announce our arrival, we send signals to others besides the mail carrier. Birds are amazingly adaptable. Many are able to survive in spite of our intervention; and even, in some cases, with the help of it! □



Home sweet home in a mailbox; photo by Claire L. Powell.

Editor's Note: To help your birds establish homes of their own, order our brochure "Wildlife Plantings, Boxes, and Platforms." It will show you how to build your own bird nest boxes, nesting platforms, and how to landscape for wildlife. Send your check for \$1 (made out to the Treasurer of Virginia) to cover postage and handling to: VDGIF, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

Claire L. Powell is a rural mail carrier living in Doswell who occasionally finds more than mail in mailboxes.

Nottoway River Float Trips

The Nottoway River is located in south central and southeastern Virginia. It begins in Prince Edward and Lunenburg Counties, flows southeasterly forming a boundary of Nottoway, Brunswick, Dinwiddie, Greenville and Sussex Counties, then meanders across Sussex and Southampton Counties to its confluence with the Blackwater River at the North Carolina line. The river length is approximately 130 miles.

The Nottoway could be considered two different rivers. Above the Route 619 bridge on the Greenville-Sussex County line, the river is generally shallow, clear and fast flowing with numerous small rapids that prevent the use of outboard motors and large boats, but provide canoeists with some nice float trips. Below Route 619, the river slows, deepens and darkens as it is joined by numerous swamps in the Coastal Plain. This part of the river, particularly in Southampton County, is large enough for bass boats during normal flows.

For anglers, the river's fishery could also be divided at the Route 619 bridge. The upper river has numerous redbreast sunfish, smallmouth bass and Roanoke rock bass. Below the bridge, these species are replaced by bluegill, largemouth bass, black crappie and catfish. In the spring, anglers can catch blueback herring, American shad and white perch migrating upstream from North Carolina.

There are five public, paved ramps, plus nine canoe access areas along the Nottoway, providing boaters and anglers with a wide variety of float trips.

Cutbank Bridge (Rt. 609) to Double Bridge (Rt. 619) (11.5 miles)

This is a trip for canoes only, as the river reaches the fall line in the last three miles of the trip. Put in at the Rt. 609 bridge and take out at the

VDGIF ramp on Rt. 651 just past the Rt. 619 bridge. A few class I and II sections must be negotiated, but should not present much problem. The river here is scenic and undeveloped and you may not see another person during your float. Fishing in this stretch can be excellent with redbreast sunfish, smallmouth bass and Roanoke bass providing most of the catch. This is a long trip with plenty of good-looking fishing waters. Anglers need to pace themselves so they reach the lower rapids before nightfall!

Double Bridge (Rt. 619) to Rt. 630 Bridge (Approx. 5 miles)

Put in at VDGIF ramp on Rt. 651, take out at VDGIF canoe access at Rt. 630 bridge. This is an easy stretch, mostly flat with just a few class I riffles. Anglers have more time to fish for the Roanoke bass, smallmouth bass and redear sunfish that inhabit this section of the river.

There is one more class II rapid a short distance downstream of Rt. 630. After that, the Nottoway slows

down and takes on more characteristics of a Coastal Plain river. Large-mouth bass, bluegill, channel and white catfish, black crappie and bowfin increase in numbers as the river flows through Sussex and Southampton Counties. There are several boat ramps and canoe accesses in these two counties, so boaters can plan a variety of trips.

Peters Bridge (Rt. 631) to Careys Bridge (Rt. 653) (9 miles)

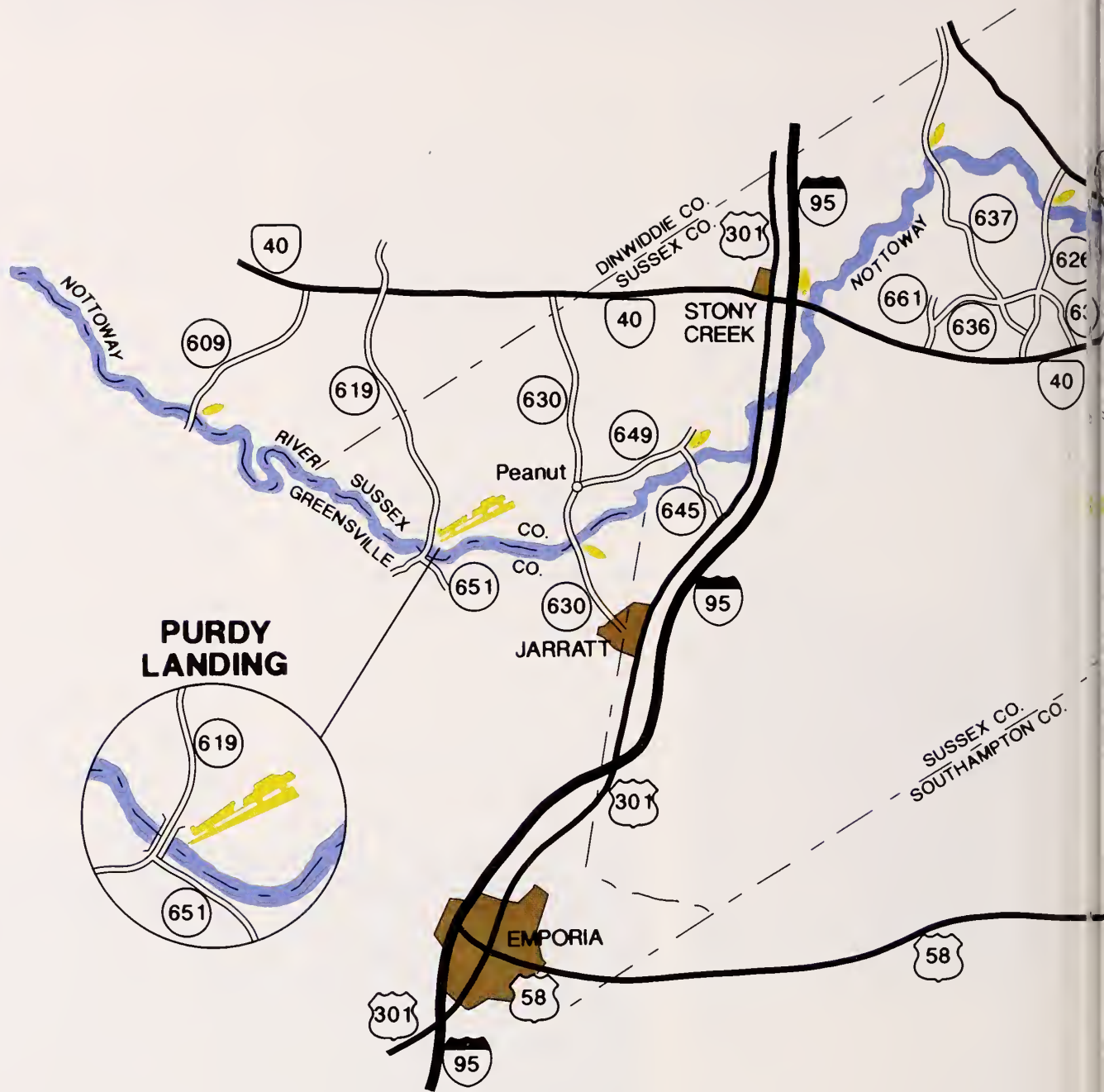
The trip from Rt. 631 to Rt. 653 is recommended in the lower stretch. There are VDGIF ramps and offroad parking areas at these two bridge crossings. The float is a little long (9 miles) for canoeists to fish much, but the scenery is nice and the float very easy. The river is deeper here than upstream, so anglers can use small motors to make up time, allowing them time to fish good spots. This transition area from the fast flowing waters upstream and the slow, swampier areas downstream provides anglers the chance to catch a little bit of everything.

Nottoway River Access Sites

Bridge Crossing	Location	Access Type	Parking	Next access (miles)
Rt 609	Dinwiddie/Brunswick	canoe	roadside*	12
Rt 619	Greenville/Sussex	ramp	offroad area**	5
Rt 630	Greenville/Sussex	canoe	offroad area	4
Rt 645	Sussex	canoe	roadside	8
Rt 40	Sussex	canoe	roadside	7
Rt 637	Sussex	canoe	roadside	5
Rt 626	Sussex	canoe	roadside	8
Rt 40	Sussex	canoe	roadside	4
Rt 634	Sussex	canoe	roadside	4
Rt 631	Sussex	ramp	offroad area	9
Rt 653	Southampton	ramp	offroad area	15
Rt 742	Southampton	canoe	end of road	4
Rt 671	Southampton	ramp	offroad area	12
Hwy 258	Southampton	ramp	offroad area	N.C.

* All bridge crossings indicated are canoe accessible, but there is very limited space to leave vehicles parked.

** An offroad parking lot is present.

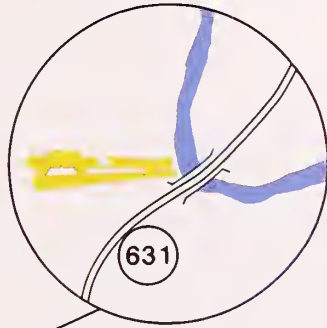


NOTTOWAY RIVER ACCESS SITES

- - CANOE ACCESS
- ▬ - BOAT RAMP



PETERS BRIDGE LANDING

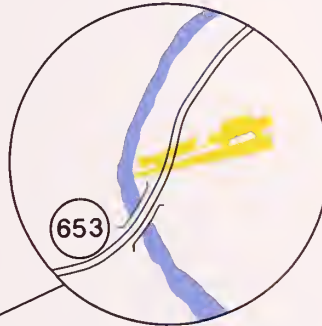


Homeville

Littleton

Sebrell

CAREY'S BRIDGE LANDING



COURTLAND

FRANKLIN

NOTTOWAY
RIVER

BLACKWATER
RIVER

VIRGINIA
NORTH CAROLINA

Delaware

HERCULES LANDING



GENERAL VAUGHN BRIDGE LANDING



Make Room for



by Gerald Almy

For the angler, there's no finer month than April. The only problem is there's *too much* good fishing to squeeze into this single month. Virtually all game fish seem to be biting at a feverish pitch, yet there are only so many weekends, days off and evening sessions that can be slipped in after work. Largemouths are turned on in lakes, smallmouths are feeding in rivers, and trout season is in full gear. Stripers are snatching bucktails in big inland lakes, and silver hickory shad are migrating up feeders of the Chesapeake, eager to swipe at colorful darts and flies jigged past their snouts. It's a rich dilemma, choosing which fish to go after. But one species I make a point never to overlook amid the rushing from one body of

water to the next is the crappie.

Crappies are among the country's most popular panfish, sought by over 20 million anglers. Although they are fine sport fish any time of year, there's something special about going after these black and white speckled fish in spring, when red-buds and dogwoods bloom and willows turn lime-green along lake shores. The fish are moving in shallow to spawn and at no other time are they as concentrated and easily caught. The flesh is firm from the cold winter waters and the fish are full of spunk and fight as they pack on calories and prepare for the breeding ritual.

For many, going after spawning crappies signals the start of a new angling year. When the big speckled

perch rise from the depths and swim shoreward to cram winter-shrunk paunches with food and deposit strips of gelatinous eggs and creamy milt along the base of flooded trees and brushpiles, it stirs deep roots within the angler's heart. The fishing season is now in full swing, and there is no better way to enjoy it than seeking out the abundant crappie.

Both white and black crappie are available throughout Virginia. Sometimes mixed populations are found in a single body of water and generally the same tactics work for both fish. White crappies are more elongated than blacks, which have a deeper body and a high, arched back. The marks on whites also appear in eight or nine distinct vertical bars, while black crappies have more random

Crappies



markings, like speckles in a calico print. Black crappies have seven or eight dorsal fin spines, while whites have only six. Blacks prefer cool, clearer waters and do not mind weeds. Whites flourish better in cloudy, silty water.

Virtually all of Virginia's large fishing impoundments have crappies—waters like Anna, Kerr, Gaston and Smith Mountain. Medium and smaller waters such as Chesdin, Burke, Brittle, Chickahominy, Briery Creek, Manassas and Occoquan also hold an abundance of these fish. Some small ponds offer good crappie fishing, with those on

three reasons at this time of year: 1) This is where the warmest water is found, 2) food is most abundant there, and 3) the shallows are where spawning takes place.

In general, the murkier and more cover-rich the habitat, the shallower the crappies will move. In clearer waters with less brush and logjams, the fish don't feel as "safe" and may spawn as deep as six to eight feet.

It's important to realize, however, that when fishing for crappies in spring, you won't be strictly going after fish that are on spawning beds, but rather those moving in to breed, those spawning, and those hanging off in deeper water after having laid their eggs or released their milt.

When water temperatures reach the mid to upper 50's, crappies move to the shallows in large numbers. If temperatures are a bit lower than this, look for them in slightly deeper water at the mouths of large feeder creeks, the entrances to coves, edges of dropoffs, around bridge pilings, sunken trees and brush eight to 12 feet deep. These areas can hold fish both before and after they move up

Your fishing plans for April may be filling up fast, but leave some time open to fish for spawning crappies. It's worth it!



the A.P. Hill military base a prime example. The fish are also found in some slow-moving rivers of the state, in both freshwater and brackish portions.

Although there's good early action for pre-spawning crappies in deep water, most fishing for speckled perch in April will focus on medium to shallow water—from about two to 10 feet deep. Crappies move into the shallows for

into thin water to spawn. If action is slow in the shallows, it's worth dropping back to this slightly deeper water. This is particularly important to keep in mind if the weather has been mild, but a cold front suddenly blows in, dropping the water temperature and drawing fish back out of the spawning areas temporarily. By moving back to slightly deeper water, you can often find heavy concentrations of fish that will still feed well in spite of the front.

Drift fishing is a great way to take crappies in these deeper "staging areas" before and after spawning and during fronts. This technique allows you to quickly cover lots of water and pinpoint roving schools of fish. The slowly moving baits trailing

Crappie fishing is a must for the April fishing calendar. The fish will be spawning in the shallows from two to 10 feet deep in nearly all our freshwater impoundments. The author's favorite lures for catching them are featured above (photo by Gerald Almy). Top: photo by Soc Clay. Opposite: photo by F. Eugene Hester.



When water temperatures reach the mid to upper 50's, crappies move to the shallows in large numbers. With ultralight spinning tackle, four to six-pound test line, small marabou and rubbertailed jigs or the Charlie Brewer Slider weedless crappie grub, you should be in for a sporting day of fishing. In pockets of open water amidst flooded timber, try "dapping" a bobber and minnow rig fished with a cane pole or nine to 10-foot fly rod. Photos **this page** and **opposite** by Gerald Almy.

behind your boat also seem to turn on the predatory instincts of crappies. A spinning outfit, cane pole or fly rod and reel filled with monofilament can be used for this fishing, with four to eight-pound line best.

Minnows are the favorite offering for drift fishing. These can be rigged beneath bobbers at various depths from three to eight feet if the crappies are shallow. Another



er option for deeper fish is to use the "tight line" method. Attach a 1-2 ounce dipsey or bell sinker to the end of the line, then from droppers 18 and 36 inches up tie on size 2-1/0 thin-wire gold hooks. You can use this rig to keep the sinker right on the bottom while the minnows float up higher in the strike zone. Having the sinker bouncing on the lake floor allows a tactile connection that telegraphs even the slightest nibble from a munching crappie up the line. A graphite fly rod is best for this tight-lining technique, with a reel filled with monofilament. A third rig you can use for drift-fishing is a spinning outfit and a 1/8-1/32 ounce jig tipped with a small minnow hooked through both lips from the bottom up. This jig/minnow combo can be dragged behind the boat with or without a bobber.

If you draw several strikes in one area while drifting, you may want to anchor and fish directly over that spot. Sometimes, though, it's better to just keep drifting through the productive area over and over, picking up a fish or two on each pass. If the wind is calm, use an electric motor or sculling paddle to move the boat slowly along. Be alert to which depths fish are striking at. If a pattern becomes clear, adjust all offerings so they float at that payoff level.

Another alternative to drifting is to find brushpiles in medium-depth water (eight to 14 feet) where fish might be staging and fish over them with a bobber and minnow, or by vertically pumping jigs. You can find these brushpiles with sonar or create them yourself before the season using cinder blocks, wire and old Christmas trees or other brush.

As the sun bakes the shallows into the mid to upper 50's, crappie will move tight to shore to spawn, and the fun begins. The slabs will be found around duck blinds, docks, beaver huts, logjams, flooded trees and brushpiles in depths of two to six feet. Darker colored males move in first, but within days the paler, egg-laden females follow.

In clean lakes with limited brushpiles and flooded timber, casting with ultralight spinning tackle and four to six-pound line is a sporting way to take crappies. Use small marabou and rubber-tailed jigs or the Charlie Brewer Slider weedless crappie grub in 1/8 to 1/32 ounce. Cast towards any dock pilings, tree trunks or brush you see, but also be alert for strikes outside this cover as the lure moves back towards the boat. Often, the heavier females will be hanging just off the structure in deeper water, while the males stay in the thick cover. Retrieve slowly and steadily, with minimal rod movement, pausing now and then to let the jig drop deeper. If action is slow, try tipping the jig with a small live minnow.

Another option for catching crappies in the shallows is to use a bobber and minnow rig, fished with a canepole or nine to 10-foot fly rod. Use the long rod or pole to "dap" the offering into pockets of open water amid flooded timber and next to the edges of logjams. This works best with just three to eight feet of eight to 10-pound line extended from the end of the rod, so you can swing the bait in and plunk it down into small openings in the flooded brush. A

small, cylindrical cork suspends the minnow two to four feet down, and if a crappie is hanging there, a strike is virtually guaranteed. Dap the minnow around every tree, brushpile, dock piling or logjam you can find, wait a minute for a strike, then plunk it into the next spot.

The final method I like for spawning crappies is a variation of this technique using a small jig instead of a live minnow. Use no bobber, but simply lower the lure down precisely next to tree trunks or brush and hold it there, suspended beside the cover. Don't jiggle it or dance it up and down—just hold it still. You *think* you're keeping the lure stationary, but actually your hand is trembling and shaking a bit, making the jig quiver like a live minnow would as it gently fins its pectorals.

If no strike comes, slowly swim the jig around the cover to the other side, wait a minute or two, then move to the next location. You may have to place the jig or minnow next to several pieces of cover before you get a strike, but by probing lots of territory with this method, a heavy catch can be made by the day's end. When you feel a tap, thump or sudden weight on the line, tighten up instantly to set the hook.

Once you latch onto a pound-sized crappie in tight cover with only four or five feet of line extended from the rod and begin a rough and tumble brawl in close quarters with this thrashing quarry, you'll know why these silver and black fish shouldn't be left out of your April angling plans—no matter how crowded this month's fishing calendar might look. □

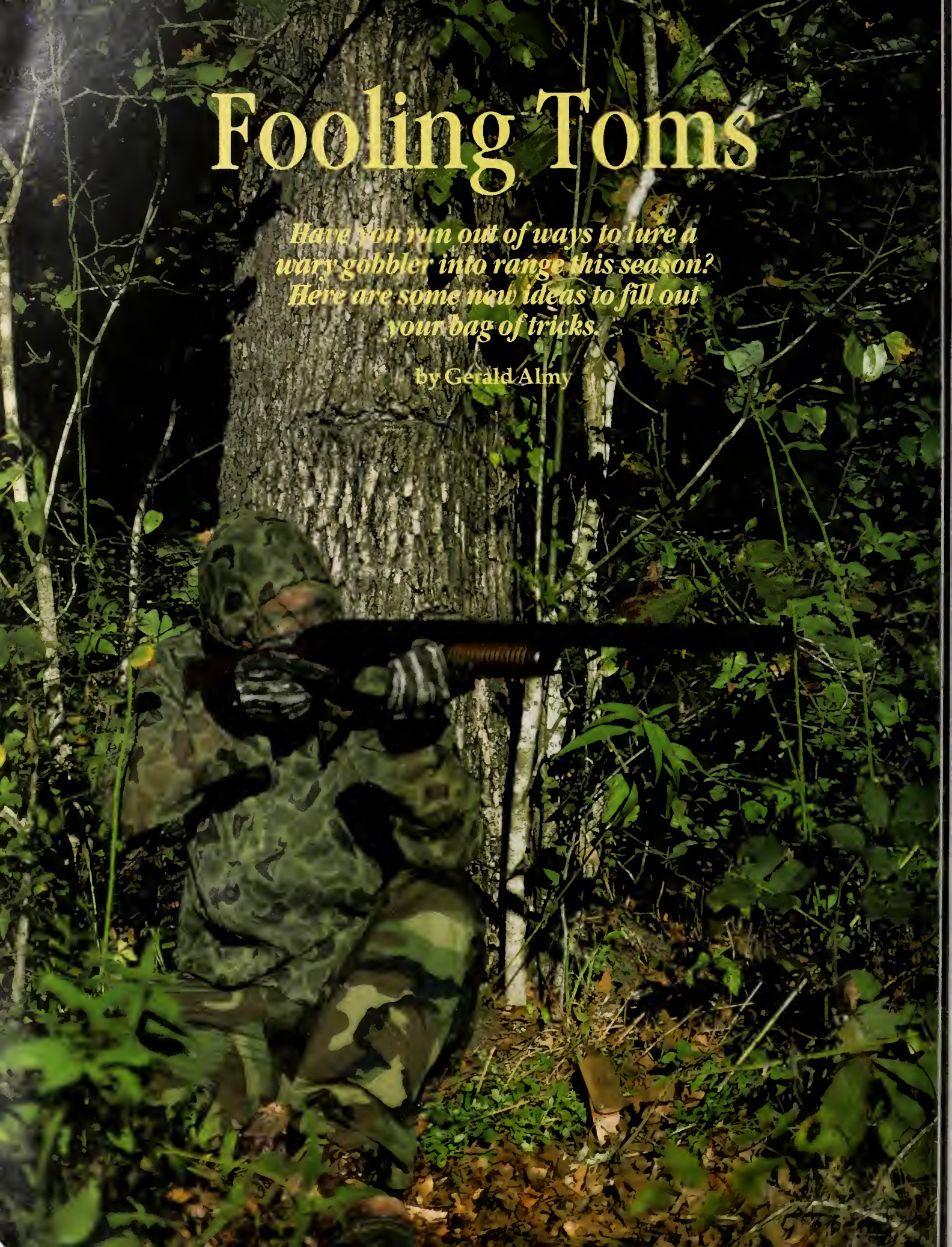
Gerald Almy has been a full-time outdoor writer for over 17 years. He is currently a hunting and fishing editor on the staff of Sports Afield.



Fooling Toms

Have you run out of ways to lure a wary gobbler into range this season? Here are some new ideas to fill out your bag of tricks.

by Gerald Almy



The woods are still a mixture of gray shadows and misty black and white shapes when Kelly Cooper lets out a series of soft tree yelps on his diaphragm call. Too early?

Not for the eager turkey perched on the ridge above us on this public hunting area. He gobbles back instantly in response to the yelps. Cooper calls again to pinpoint the bird's location more precisely. This time the bird double-gobbles back.

We make our way swiftly through the brightening spring woods until we reach a clearing perhaps 150 yards from the still-gobbling tom.

"This may be his strutting area," Cooper says softly. "Walk 30 yards up into the woods towards him and find a good tree to sit against. I'll stay behind you and move as the bird moves, so I can steer him to you."

Sneaking quietly through the brush, I find a thick oak and take my position, gun propped over knees, headnet and gloves pulled on. With few leaves on the trees, I feel vulnerable and exposed—even in full camo.

But if I remain perfectly motionless, perhaps the old gobbler will strut into shotgun range.

Kelly wastes no time. As soon as I'm set, a symphony of turkey sounds begins emerging from the woods behind me. The tom up the ridge from us responds wildly, gobbling and double-gobbling until it seems he will choke if he gobbles any more. Then he triple-gobbles.

Cooper is moving about behind me, and the sound he is making is incredibly realistic. For all the world it seems the "hen" is moving around naturally, feeding and milling about. The tom moves closer and closer, until finally I see his red head. He is too far, though, and hangs up momentarily.

Sensing that the bird has stopped, Cooper moves further away. That does the trick. The gobbler feels his lady friend is leaving and marches boldly towards her—right into my lap. Half an hour after we entered the woods, when the bird reaches 35 yards, I squeeze off on its head and neck and the hunt is finished. Nineteen pounds, 1 1/3 inch

spurs, 9 1/2-inch beard. A trophy anywhere, but particularly on public hunting land.

The tactic that put that wily old gobbler into clean killing range of my shotgun was one of a number of new techniques innovative hunters have developed in recent years to deal with today's increasingly difficult, hard-pressured toms. A few years back, simply having one hunter set up in front of another was considered a different approach than the typical one-on-one confrontation that gobbler hunting usually consists of. But Cooper, and a few others who use his "float calling" method, have taken it one step further.

"Real hens don't sit in one spot calling all morning," says the call maker from Pennsylvania, who manufactures Kelly's Kallers. "They are constantly moving, feeding and travelling. By positioning one hunter as close to the tom as possible without spooking it, or in a particularly good ambush spot, then getting back behind that person and *moving*, I can literally steer the bird into the hunter's lap. If I hear from his gob-



It might be time to try some new tactics to lure toms in this spring gobbler season. Opposite: Photo by Lloyd B. Hill. Above: Jakes on the move; photo by Bill Lea.

bles that the tom is moving too much to the right or left, I simply shift in the opposite direction. If he hangs up, I usually move further away, to make him think the hen is leaving and he better come in."

Cooper also employed two calls at once. The idea is to throw out a variety of sounds with box, slate, glass, push-pen wingbone or diaphragm calls to make the tom think there are several birds present, squabbling and squawking away.

I've seen several experts employ this, but none impressed me more with his realistic rendition of multiple turkey sounds than Rob Keck, executive vice-president of the National Wild Turkey Federation, on a recent hunt. At one point, Keck used three calls simultaneously and made the woods sound alive with turkeys. And it worked. The gobbler we were after came slinking in silently, unable to resist the flock he thought he heard congregating at the edge of the clearcut.

That tom slipping in without calling brings up another tactic some hunters may have overlooked. It's important to remember that toms won't *always* respond to your calls. But, that doesn't mean they aren't there. You may be set up in an area you pre-scouted that had good sign and birds gobbling when you checked it out earlier, but you hear nothing talking at dawn. If you know of another area to try, it's fine to hop in the pickup and head there quickly. But an alternative that champion caller Jim Clay of Winchester showed me can also be worth trying. Clay, who owns Perfection Calls with partner Tom DuVall, says you can sometimes call a bird in without getting a single response from him, if you have the patience and stay put.

"If you know a tom is using an area but don't hear him, sometimes you can take that turkey by simply setting up in a prime area he likes to use and calling. He might not answer, but if you have the patience to sit perfectly still and call just enough to let him know you're there, you can often lure him in silently."

Clay and DuVall don't recommend this as their standard approach, since they both agree a large

part of the thrill of spring turkey hunting is having the bird gobble as it responds to your call and marches in. But on particularly tough, hard-pressed birds or when nothing in the woods is sounding off, it's a good alternative strategy to have up your camouflaged sleeve. If you don't mind shooting jakes, this technique is particularly effective on them. These young males are often leery of sounding off with bigger, aggressive toms in the woods and they often sneak in without making a sound.

Many hunters know about using an owl call at first light to locate toms. But if you want to startle toms into gobbling at other times, try crow calls, or predator calls. Perfection also makes a new "Shocker Call" that I've used with good results to get toms to sound off. After they call once, you can move in more closely, set up and hopefully lure them in with hen talk.

If a bird hangs up out of range and you can't see it, most hunters simply give up and try for another turkey. This isn't always the best response, though. Instead, try one of two approaches. The first is to switch to another type of call with a different sound. If you've been using a slate, try a box; if you've been using a diaphragm, try a glass or push-pen. That change may be enough to incite the tom into coming the few final yards into shooting range.

If this tactic doesn't work, try slowly slipping away from where you're set up and moving either straight back, or parallel, 50-100 yards. There could have been an obstacle between you and the bird or simply something about that location he didn't like. Or the tom could sense from your movement that the hen is about to leave and decide he'd better make his move.

Traditionally, turkey hunting is considered best just after dawn when the birds first fly down from the roost. However, as more and more hunters flock to the woods, toms are becoming quieter on the roost in many areas. Sometimes they simply slip off silently; other times they'll perhaps let out one or two token gobbles, then fly off towards nearby hens. Yet by eight or 10 a.m., these

same birds may be bellowing loudly after the hens have left them. Most hunters are back at camp or at work, having quit an hour after first light. You have uncrowded woods and gobbling toms awaiting you many mornings if you simply stick with it and hunt later than normal.

Just as late mornings can be good, so can the late season. Most hunters have hung up their guns by this time and taken up fishing rods. But this can be one of the easiest times of all to lure in a tom, since so many hens have already been bred and are uninterested in gobblers. This shortage of receptive hens is to your advantage during the last few weeks of the season. So is the lack of competition from other hunters.

Most sportsmen head to the deep woods for spring toms, but clearcuts shouldn't be overlooked. These are excellent areas for hens to nest and gobblers aren't going to be far away from the hens. Toms also



Using different calls at the same time can often lure in a reluctant gobbler with the promise of several hens. **Above:** a selection of turkey calls; photo by Gerald Almy. **Opposite:** Wild turkey gobbler; photo by Bill Lea.

seem to know they can be seen far away by lots of hens if they're in a clearcut, so they often head for them to put on a mating display.

Traditional gobbler hunters in the old days took to the woods with a long-barreled gun, because those were considered the "tightest choked." Today's savvy turkey hunters know that choke is not a factor of barrel length. They also realize that a long barrel can get in the way when you're walking through the woods, or if you have to move to aim at a bird coming in from a direction

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE



you didn't expect it. A barrel of 22 to 26 inches is perfect for spring gobbler hunting. It's lighter, easier to carry and more maneuverable in the woods than a long one. Make sure it's full choked, though, and add a sling for ease of carrying when walking into and out of the woods.

A final point to keep in mind in the woods this spring is to use an extra dose of caution as you hunt. Wear a blaze orange vest or hat walking into or out of the woods. Avoid using a gobbler call if other hunters could be around. Never wear red, blue or white colors. Wrap a blaze orange sash around the tree you're sitting under, and always pick a tree to lean against that is wider than your

body. Carry your trophy bird out of the woods in a blaze orange bag and wear blaze orange entering and leaving the woods. Don't wave or motion if you see another hunter in the woods, but instead talk firmly in a loud voice. Never shoot at sound or what you *think* might be a gobbler. Be 100 percent certain what you see is a legal tom and that no other hunter could be behind it within shotgun range. Be safe, be careful, and use your head when you hunt Virginia's wild turkeys this spring! □

Gerald Almy has been a full-time outdoor writer for 17 years. He is currently a hunting and fishing editor on the staff of Sports Afield magazine.

Play It Safe This Spring

When you go turkey hunting this spring, make sure you take the following precautions. Your life and the life of others may depend on it.

- Never wear red, white, or blue colors.
- Don't use a headnet that obscures your vision.
- Never shoot at movement or sounds.
- Use binoculars to identify your game.
- Always call in terrain that is fairly open with a visibility of at least 50 yards in every direction. This will allow you to see approaching hunters.
- Never wave, stand or sound a turkey call if you see another hunter approaching. Use a strong, clear, loud voice instead.
- Avoid using gobbler calls during spring hunting season.
- Anytime you use a turkey decoy, you increase the chance of an accident. If you use a decoy, place it so that you are not in danger of being shot.
- When setting up to call, make sure your back is protected by a tree wider than your shoulders.
- Wrap a blaze orange sash around the tree you are sitting under.
- Always wear blaze orange when walking into and out of the woods and when moving from stand to stand.
- If you bag a bird, carry it wrapped up in blaze orange material.
- When hunting with others, be certain of each other's location.
- Discuss and emphasize safety techniques with hunting companions.

*Adapted from: **Turkey Hunting Safety** produced by the National Rifle Association.*



Zebra mussel; photo by Lee Walker.

Zebra Mussel Alert

Zebra mussels are threatening Virginia's waters! An exotic species that has made its way over to the U.S. from Europe, this mussel is now seriously endangering native mussels and other aquatic life in the Great Lakes region. We must stop it from entering our own lakes and rivers.

You can help! Zebra mussels are easily transported on the hulls of boats or in live wells. If you are in an area infested with zebra mussels, be sure to thoroughly rinse your boat, trailer and boat parts and allow it all to completely dry. If you find a zebra mussel or a cluster of them, save a few in alcohol for our biologists, crush the rest and dispose of in trash. Please report all suspected sightings of zebra mussels to the Fisheries Division of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries at 804/367-1000. □

Support For Our Neotropical Migratory Birds

Virginia Power and the board members of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries have generously matched a contribution by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to produce a 20-page full-color publication entitled "Birds in Peril, The Plight of Neotropical Migratory Birds in Virginia."

Originally produced as a special feature in the May 1992 issue of *Vir-*

ginia Wildlife under the title, "On a Wing and a Prayer," the publication examines the recent, alarming decline of some of Virginia's most colorful and beloved songbirds. With the deforestation of wintering grounds in Central and South America and the alteration, fragmentation and destruction of summer breeding habitat, many of our birds are facing competition, stress, and rapid declines in their populations.

Because of the support of Virginia Power, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the personal contributions of VDGIF's own board members, this educational publication is available free to the public by writing to: Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Attn: Toni Harrison, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. □

standing contribution of one of our 1,400 hard-working hunter education volunteers, is administered by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and supported by a trust fund established by Mr. and Mrs. William Morgan of Madison Heights in memory of their son who was killed in a hunting accident in 1983.

Since 1975, Paul Hockenberry has served as a volunteer Hunter Education Instructor, and in 1984 he took on additional duties as the Portsmouth City Hunter Education Coordinator. During these 18 years of service to the program, he has trained over 1,120 students and contributed over 572 hours of his time. He has also sponsored several skeet-shooting session for youths through the Izaak Walton League, and suc-



Paul Hockenberry (right) receives award from Lt. Dianne Gawry (left).

Hunter Education Award

Paul Hockenberry of Portsmouth was awarded the William Dixon Morgan Memorial Award this year for his outstanding contribution to the Virginia Hunter Education Program. This prestigious award, which once a year singles out the out-

ceeded in recruiting 15 instructors for the Hunter Education Program.

In addition to working with the Hunter Education Program, for the past 21 years Hockenberry has served on the organizational committee of the Tidewater Hunting and Fishing Days Festival. His exhibit at this event was recognized as "Most Educational Exhibit," and he was

also honored with the Virginia Wildlife Federation's First Aid Award for saving a young boy's life during the festival.

Says Lt. Dianne Gawrys, former Hunter Education Training Sergeant for Region I, "Mr. Hockenberry is an exemplary model of the dedicated volunteer instructor, and has greatly enhanced the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Hunter Education Program." □

Keeping Your Home "Green"

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay has produced a 32-page book which explains in detail what people can do around the home to protect the environment, including chapters on erosion control, septic systems, landscaping, household chemicals, and community action. Your first copy is free from the Chesapeake Regional Information Service (Phone: 1-800-662-CRIS). Additional copies are \$1 each.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has also published a new edition of its "Simple Ways to Save the Bay," a concise and handy "keeper" booklet with suggestions for the use and disposal of lawn and garden pesticides, household pesticides, household cleaners, paint products, and auto wastes. It also lists alternatives to commercially available products. The brochure is free by writing to: Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Grassroots Department (HT), 162 Prince George St., Annapolis, MD 21401. □

A Sportsman's Reward

Each year, 25 to 75 black bears causing crop or beehive damage on private land are trapped and relocated to more remote areas by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). These bears are outfitted with metal ears tags inscribed with a request that the tags be returned to the VDGIF if the bear is harvested. Because their return provides us with valuable research data, a reward of \$50 is offered for this co-

operation.

On October 19, 1992, Mr. Anthony P. Duncan of Wytheville harvested a bear and returned two metal bear tags to VDGIF with the following note:

"I wish to donate my \$50 reward

to the Virginia Nongame Program. I would feel bad accepting money for an animal I have killed. The bear is my reward for my efforts in hunting."

We at VDGIF are honored by the words and actions of this sportsman.



Photo by Tim Wright

If you like to hunt, you'll love our... Amelia Sporting Clays Range

Try the shooting sport of the 90's at VDGIF's Amelia Wildlife Management Area! Designed as a sporting experience to sharpen a shotgunner's skills, the 105-acre Amelia Sporting Clays Range consists of 11 stations and 50 shots which simulate actual hunting situations for the upland bird and waterfowl hunter. Each round on the course costs \$15 with a valid Virginia hunting license for adults and \$10 for those 12-15 years old. Reservations are required and the range is open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Call 804/367-8464 or 367-1000 for reservations and more information.

Letters

Kudos

I have been receiving *Virginia Wildlife* for a number of years and have enjoyed each and every issue. I will truly say that the January 1993 issue is the best by far. I have been a tobacco and small grain farm in Pittsylvania County all my life, where tobacco is the backbone of the county. Thank you again for a very fine issue on Southside Virginia.

Archie and Mary Motley,
Chatham

Received my first issue (January 1993) and have never seen the quality of workmanship displayed so beautifully! Keep up the good work, as I anxiously await your next issue!

L. Dunkle,
Mertztown, PA

Congratulations on your special photo issue (January 1993). It was done quite well, beautiful pictures.

Mrs. Robert A. Hunter,
Marion

This January *Virginia Wildlife* is something to be proud of. It is a work

of art. If I wasn't 84, I would renew for three years!

J.B. Pope, M.D.,
Richmond

Just when I think you have reached your *Virginia Wildlife* innovation limit, you prove me wrong. The February 1993 issue is something else! Wonder how many of us native Virginians knew all we harbor in our great Commonwealth. Please send me two additional copies.

John W. Watkins,
Williamsburg

Virginia's State Record Fish as of March 1, 1993

Species	Weight	Location	Date Caught	Angler
Largemouth Bass	16 lbs., 4 oz.	Conner Lake	4-16-85	Richard Tate
Smallmouth Bass	7 lbs., 7 oz.	New River	11-22-86	John Justice
Spotted Bass	No Entry - Minimum weight of 3 lbs. to qualify			
Sunfish	4 lbs., 12 oz.	Private Pond	4-27-86	Michael Mills
Crappie	4 lbs., 3 oz.	Gaston Reservoir	4-18-87	Jeff Bates
Roanoke Bass	2 lbs., 6 oz.	Smith Mountain Lake	5-2-88	Bobby Barnette
Rock Bass	2 lbs., 2 oz.	Laurel Bed Lake	5-17-86	Larry Ball
Striped Bass	44 lbs., 14 oz.	Smith Mountain Lake	7-7-92	Gary L. Tomlin
White Bass	6 lbs., 13 oz.	Lake Orange	7-31-89	Ron Sprouse
White Perch	2 lbs., 1 oz.	Back Bay	4-11-87	Ricky Simmons
Walleye	12 lbs., 15 oz.	S.F. Holston River	2-2-90	Christopher Thomas
Yellow Perch	2 lbs., 2 oz.	New River	4-13-86	Roderick Elliott
Brown Trout	14 lbs., 12 oz.	S.F. Holston River	5-24-90	Mike S. Perkins
Rainbow Trout	12 lbs., 9 oz.	Private Pond	8-6-86	David Gladwell
Brook Trout	5 lbs., 11 oz.	Big Stony Creek	10-22-87	Greg Orndorff
Channel Catfish	31 lbs., 8 oz.	Rappahannock River	10-2-92	Sue Stanley
Blue Catfish	56 lbs., 12 oz.	James River	11-21-91	Scott A. Nissen
Flathead Catfish	56 lbs., 0 oz.	Occoquan Reservoir	3-30-88	James Krupkowski
White Catfish	7 lbs., 6 oz.	Western Branch Reservoir	3-24-92	Thomas F. Elkins
Muskie (including Tiger)	45 lbs., 0 oz.	New River	7-30-89	Ronnie Underwood
Northern Pike	27 lbs., 12 oz.	Hungry Mother Lake	9-5-87	Richard Bowman
Chain Pickerel	7 lbs., 1 oz.	Douthat Lake	10-7-89	Mark Agner
Carp	49 lbs., 4 oz.	Lake Prince	6-25-86	Jeffrey Graham
Gar	25 lbs., 2 oz.	Lake Prince	5-2-87	Roger Beaver
Bowfin	No Entry - Minimum weight of 15 lbs to qualify			

Outdoor Almanac

By Spike Knuth

What is the magic of little creeks? They've always fascinated me. Water is often considered the life's blood of the earth, and certainly little creeks can be likened to capillaries bringing life to a body's extremities. I think every kid should grow up with a little creek in his or her backyard. Creeks help us to learn and appreciate our natural surroundings.

I remember a little nothing of a creek in Waukesha, Wisconsin, across from my dad's motorcycle shop. It ran by a manufacturing plant and was undoubtedly polluted to some extent, yet I was always assured of finding some type of wildlife along its edges. Usually, it was those common birds, such as song sparrows, robins, juncos and white-throated sparrows, but occasionally spring warblers would find respite along the brushy edges of the little waterway as they migrated northward.

There were garter snakes, and sometimes I'd even see shiners darting about in the deeper, sandy-bottomed portions of the little stream. Alder, willow and a host of other vegetation, including numerous wildflowers grew along the creek. Most of them were not known to me at the time, but the area served as a primer to start learning about them.

Recently, I had occasion to find another small stream, located behind a motel along a Virginia interstate highway. It was a beautiful spring evening and I decided to just take a walk around the motel. But, the little stream trickling down alongside the motel beckoned me, and I headed downhill through an open field to investigate, just like the old days!

Like the stream I remembered, this one wasn't much of a creek. It probably was a little polluted from highway runoff and from businesses nearby, but it still ran fairly clear as it meandered along the field border. On the other side it was brushy with more trees, mainly sycamore and alder.

Meadowlarks went unseen but poured forth their spring song as I walked toward a lone cedar in the field on my way to the creek. A song sparrow dove into some gray skeletons of some smaller cedars that had been mowed down sometime during last fall.

Grasses, shrubs, sycamores and a few willows lined the edges of the stream. In the stream itself were a few beds of watercress and other unidentified mossy aquatic plants. (I am still learning my plants!)

There didn't seem to be anything more to see here and I was about to go back when I was startled by the splash of a water snake as it dropped off of a willow branch. I decided to walk just a few more yards before selling the little creek short. It did not disappoint me.

Glancing downstream, I spotted a flash of wings in an old sycamore. It was a plain-looking bird, dark-olive above and grayish underneath. It's not surprising to find the Eastern phoebe as early as March along a little stream. They are especially fond of nesting under old bridges, in culverts, under the eaves of cabins, sheds, or other outbuildings, or on any flat shelves on a house porch. As I got closer, I saw a second bird and both watched me nervously with tails jerking. They had apparently chosen a nest site in a tangle of roots of an upturned sycamore or in a cavity of a living sycamore.

As I continued my walk, I noticed little trails of packed-down grass meandering parallel to the creek. At first I thought they may have been made by deer, but then I decided, no, they were too narrow and indirect. Occasionally a trail would lead to and down the creek bank. Beaver was considered, but no, there were no cuttings and no lodge in sight.

My thoughts were interrupted by a loud rushing of water, and I came upon the spot where the little creek joined a larger stream. This stream had high, scoured banks, in-

dicating periods of high water. A hen mallard flushed from the shallow water pool, noisily quacking as she flew upstream. Then a little rough-winged swallow appeared as if out of nowhere, swooping deftly to light on a branch of another sycamore. As I watched him, I caught a glimpse of a great blue heron flapping lazily away. Apparently, I had startled it from the same area as the mallard, and it, too, took off upstream before circling back downstream. A flash of brilliant blue revealed a male bluebird landing on a sycamore branch. A robin first scolded me, then began singing his spring song when he surmised I was no threat.

The little packed-down trails in the grass were more numerous here, crisscrossing and curling, with more access to the water and one spot was obviously a place where the critters had lain around for a time. I found a den hole. I saw no evidence of remains of food they may have been eating, but I was now certain that the trails were made by a family of otters.

Here I was, only about a half-mile from an interstate highway, along a little stream that abounded in wildlife. I got so involved in my half-hour nature hike that I didn't even hear the 18-wheelers pounding down and over their concrete trails.

I took another look back downstream. Now there were two rough-winged swallows settled down on an old root sticking out from a dirt bank. Likely, they were about to set up housekeeping in the bank. The robin continued singing from his perch, solidifying his claim on the territory. Somewhere across the field, the meadowlarks called. This little stream had not disappointed me. They never do.

As I left this little, seemingly insignificant, corner of wildness, it brought home again the realization that our natural lands are just that. One little "insignificant" corner of wildness after another. When a single one is lost, we lose a lot. □

Recipes

By Joan Cone

Turning Ill-tempered Turtles Into Good Meals

Snapping turtles are the largest and heaviest reptiles in Virginia. Offsetting their negative aspects, including their desire to dine on baby ducklings, is that they are readily transformed into excellent meals. With sea turtles now endangered species, snappers are featured in stews, soups and seafood courses by fine restaurants everywhere.

MENU

Turtle Scotch Broth
Pineapple Salad Mexicali
Sweet Potato Biscuits
Neola's Heath Bar Pie

Turtle Scotch Broth (For crockpot)

1 pound turtle meat
3 carrots, cut into small pieces
3 turnips, cut into small pieces
1 onion, chopped into small pieces
1/3 cup pearly barley
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon instant parsley flakes
1 can (10-1/2 ounces) beef broth
2 soup cans water

Place vegetables and barley in crockpot; sprinkle with salt and parsley flakes. Place turtle meat on top and add beef broth and water. Cover and cook on low heat for 8 to 10 hours. Lift out meat, remove from the bone and cut into small pieces. Return meat to crockpot and correct seasoning. Serves 4.

Pineapple Salad Mexicali

1 can (8-1/4 ounces) sliced pineapple in syrup
1 medium head iceberg lettuce
1 large tomato
1 cup bean sprouts, rinsed and well-drained
Guacamole (recipe below)

Drain pineapple, reserving syrup for another use. Slice lettuce

into four thick slices. Place one slice on each serving plate. Slice tomato into 4 thick slices; top lettuce with tomato slice. Chop bean sprouts slightly and place on tomato slices. Spoon guacamole over bean sprouts. Top all with a slice of pineapple. Makes 4 servings.

Guacamole

1 avocado, peeled and mashed
2 tablespoons dairy sour cream
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon onion salt
1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
1/8 teaspoon chili powder
Combine all ingredients just before serving.

*Sweet Potato Biscuits

1 large or 2 small (about 12 ounces total) sweet potatoes
6 tablespoons milk
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 tablespoon light brown sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut in bits
2 tablespoons chilled vegetable shortening, cut in bits

Prick the sweet potatoes, then cook in a microwave oven for about 8 minutes, or bake wrapped in foil in a conventional oven for about 1 hour at 375 degrees until very tender. Let cool, then peel and mash with a fork to make 1 cup. Blend the milk into the mashed sweet potatoes and set aside. (Can prepare 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate.)

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, sift or whisk together the flour, baking powder, brown sugar, salt and pepper. Cut in the butter and shortening until mixture resembles small peas. Using a fork, gently beat in the mashed sweet

potato mixture to make a soft but manageable dough. Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead 5 times. Roll or pat to 1/2-inch thickness and cut with a 2-inch biscuit cutter. Reroll and cut scraps once. Place biscuits on a large greased baking sheet. Bake in the center of the oven for 14 to 17 minutes, until golden brown and well risen. Makes about 24 biscuits.

Neola's Heath Bar Pie

Neola Waller served us this elegant pie at her lovely Virginia Beach home.

1 baked 9-inch graham cracker crust, cooled
1/2 gallon vanilla ice cream
4 Heath toffee candy bars, crushed

Sauce

1-1/2 cups sugar
1 cup evaporated milk
Dash salt
1/4 cup butter or margarine
2 Heath candy bars, crushed
1/4 cup light corn syrup
Spoon half of softened (but not melted) ice cream into pie shell. Sprinkle 4 crushed Heath bars on top. Cover with remaining ice cream. Wrap and freeze.

For sauce, combine sugar, milk, butter, syrup and salt. Boil one minute and remove from heat. Stir in 2 crushed Heath bars; cool slightly. Spoon over individual pie wedges. Remaining sauce should be refrigerated. Makes 8 to 12 servings. *Note:* A chocolate crumb crust may be substituted for the graham cracker crust.

*Recipe from *PARTIES! Menus for Easy Good Times*, Harper-Collins Publishers; November, 1992. □

Photo Tips

By Lynda Richardson

A Day at the Office

"I'm sorry. I don't have any shots of ruffed lemurs leaping through trees in Madagascar. Have you called Franz about those?"

"Red-shouldered hawks? I've got full body shots of one perching in conifers and the paler south Florida version perching and feeding on a praying mantis...Send a selection of those?"

"You also need what?...Head shot of a great white shark...gaping jaws... blood...for the cover? No, I'm sure I don't have that."

"Federal Express for tomorrow delivery? No problem."

So, you want to be a professional wildlife photographer? Well, in nearly seven years of working at it, I've discovered that you spend more time captioning and labeling slides, pulling and refiling slides, filling stock photo requests, writing query letters, following up late-paying clients, making sure quarterly tax payments are sent, billing clients, organizing a marketing campaign, visiting old and new clients with a portfolio, running to the post office, the bank and camera stores than you ever do actually shooting!

Wildlife photography assignments are very hard to come by. First, there aren't that many assignments out there, and secondly, there are literally thousands of folks who claim wildlife photographer status. Because of this dilemma, stock photography has been a popular outlet for wildlife photographers. Images shot while on assignment as well as those taken in one's "spare time" or during self assignments, can all be considered potential stock images for resale. These images are either sent off to a carefully selected stock agent on the national or international market, or the photographer sets up a cata-

logging system and sells the images himself. The most successful photographers do both.

To sell stock requires the patience and perseverance of good record keeping. Slides must be filed where they can be found quickly and easily. And, they must be sent out and returned in an organized, timely, and professional manner.

To accomplish this, it is important to first decide on a method of storage and retrieval. I keep nearly all my stock images in huge file cabinets in a cool, dry place. Inside the cabinets, I have numbered, color-coded folders and in those folders are archival plastic slide pages housing 20 numbered and labeled slides per page. Additionally, each slide is protected in its slide page by an archival, 2 X 2 plastic KEE mount.



Archival plastic sleeves known as KEE mounts protect slides from dirt, oil and scratches; photo by Tim Wright.

A numbering system is highly recommended for the stock photographer. Before a slide is labeled, it should be given its own individual number to help you and your clients keep track of all images. My computer system gives each slide an individual number, caption information, and prints out a label which includes my name and address. It tracks the sales history of slides and lets me know when orders are late returning.

As far as information to be included on your label, I prepare my labels as follows: The top label states the common and Latin name of the

animal subject, noting any particular behavior shown as well as where the photograph was taken. If people are in the photograph, I include their names as well. The bottom label carries the copyright symbol, my name, address and phone number. If you don't have access to a computer, labeling can be done by hand.

When someone phones, faxes or mails a request, I pull slides and create a delivery memo. This memo lists all images that I'm sending the client, including individual slide numbers and brief descriptions of the images. I also state how I received the request, my understood use of the submission, and the agreed-upon price or any particulars of usage. On the back of the memo, I state how I wish the images to be handled, instructions for their safe return and my expectations in compensation for images damaged while in the client's possession. I send two copies of the memo and request that one be signed and returned within five days.

If you are interested in becoming a wildlife photographer, remember that it is a very competitive field. Learning to organize your images for stock photography sales is one way of getting into the market. If you would like to learn more about stock photography, I would recommend the following reading material:

1) *ASMP Stock Photography Handbook, Second Edition*, A Compilation by the American Society of Magazine Photographers, ASMP National Headquarters, 419 Park Avenue South, New York, New York, 10016 (212) 889-9144.

2) *Negotiating Stock Photo Prices 1992, Sellers Guide*, Jim Pickerell, 110 Frederick Avenue, Suite A, Rockville, Maryland, 20850, (301) 251-0720.

Maybe someday you'll have ruffed lemurs leaping or great white sharks gaping. Good luck! □



by Col. William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

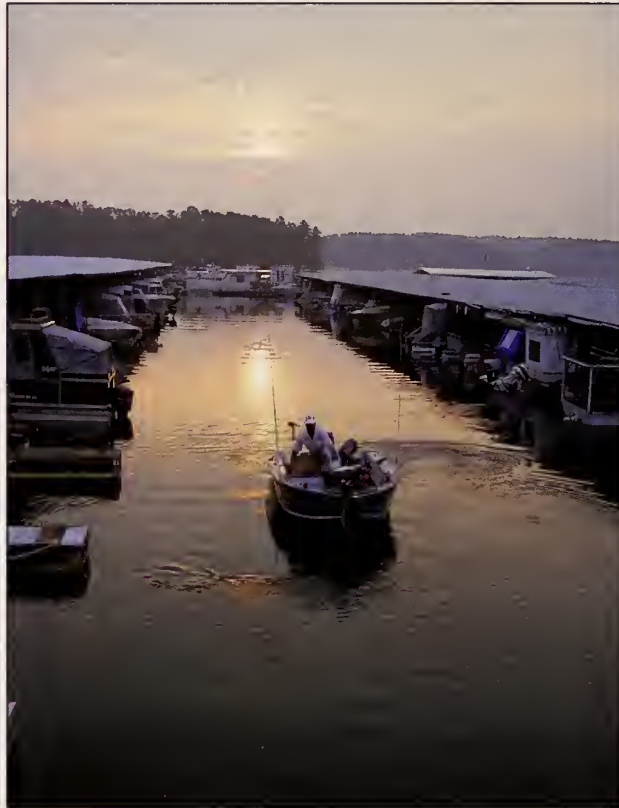
Harden the Target Boat

One summer day we went to our boat and were shocked to find that we had been robbery victims. Our depth finder was still there, but our VHF-FM marine radio was gone and so was our loud hail-er system, including automatic fog-horn, aground-bell, fog-bell, intercom, and our little CB radio. A window had been broken to gain entry. Other small items were missing and the whole boat interior was in disarray. Our insurance covered everything, but at depreciated values. Anger at the unknown thieves was inevitable, though useless. All we could do was try to prevent a reoccurrence. We were lucky. The entire boat could have been stolen.

An average of 1,000 boats are reported stolen monthly, and that amounts to about 35 boats every day, according to statistics compiled by the National Association of Marine Investigators. The chances of recovering a stolen boat are one in 10.

BOAT U.S. recommends the steps listed below to harden the boat target and make things tougher for thieves and vandals:

- Whenever possible, boats should be kept in a safe, preferably guarded location.
- Boats should be made a tough target for thieves by using theft-warning decals, locks and alarms. Anti-theft devices can be bypassed, but they make burglary harder and buy time a crook may not have.
- Boats on trailers are easy to steal because a thief's tow-vehicle can be



Take precautions to protect your boat from thieves who are currently stealing 35 boats per day in the U.S.; photo by Soc Clay.

hooked up to the trailer tongue and the boat and trailer disappear into the sunset. To provide normal security, a trailer wheel lock should be installed. If plans call for the boat and trailer to be stationary for a long time, one or more wheels should be removed and stored.

- Theft should be reported quickly to police and the appropriate insurance company before the thieves' trail has grown cold.

- Cost receipts for major equipment items should be kept, as well as copies of ownership and registration documents. Photographs are very

helpful in recovery of stolen property. These items should be onshore in a safe place.

If equipment is stolen, police should be asked to check for fingerprints. Ignition keys should always be removed from boats which are not in use, even if the owner/operator intends to be gone a very short time. The same is true of tow vehicle ignition keys.

If a boat is left in the water, it is a good idea to contact other boat owners who keep their vessels in the same area. An agreement can be made to watch out for one another's boats and challenge or report strangers or suspicious activities. Frequent and irregular visits to boats is important. It should be remembered that persons who intend to steal often hang around an untended target to become familiar with normal local activity so they can pick the best time for their crimes.

As a follow-up to this, the principles of an effective crime reduction system used in neighborhoods can be used around marinas. Called "neighborhood watch," this highly organized system will work to reduce boat theft if the same methods are used. Almost every city and county police force has a staff member who will be glad to teach organized boaters how to protect their boats through group surveillance.

There is little doubt that boat theft will go on regardless of police vigilance, but we boaters can make it difficult for them. □

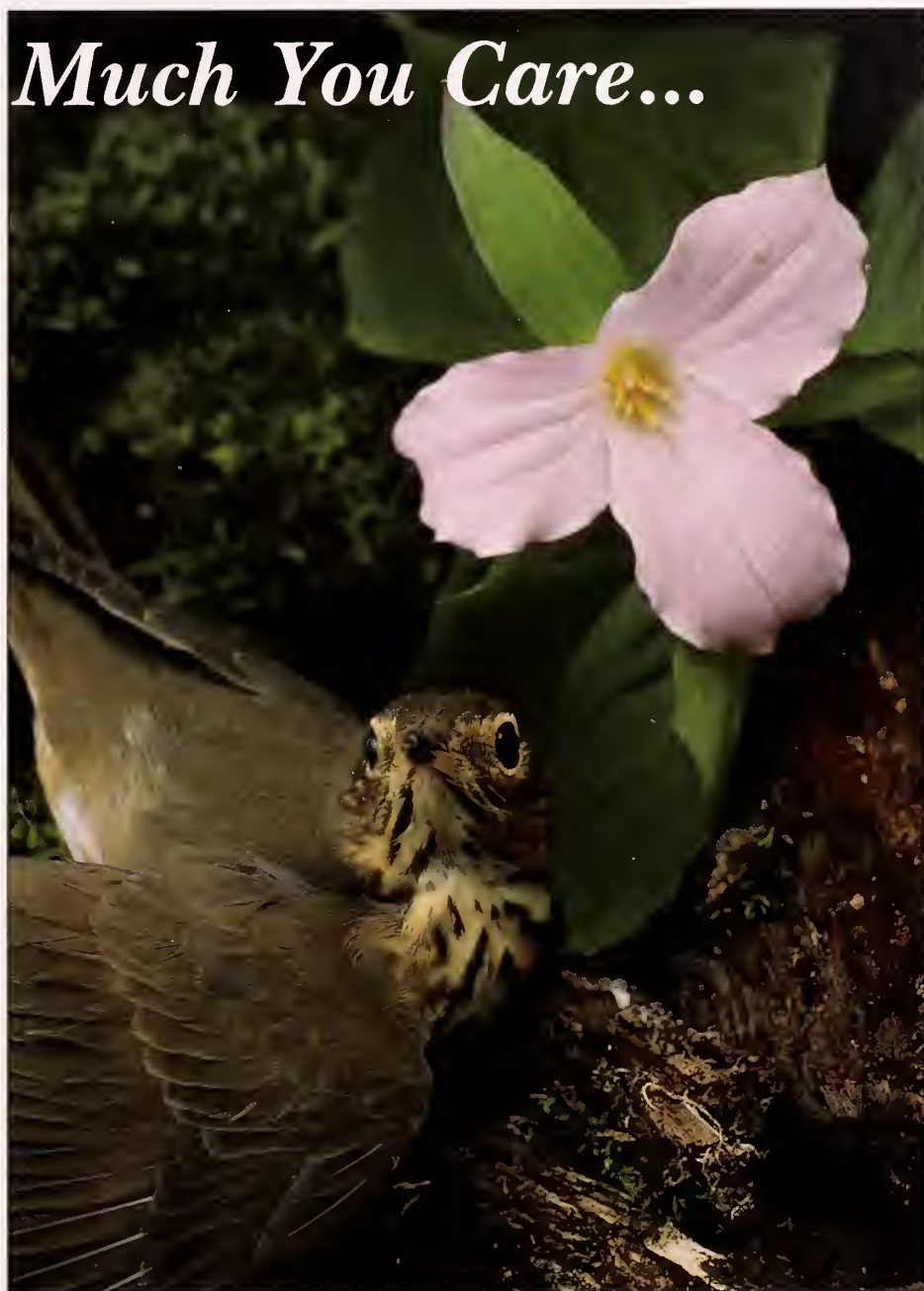
Show How Much You Care...

...Give To Virginia's Nongame and Endangered Species Fund

Many of Virginia's wildlife are in danger. Suffering from habitat loss and the dangers of pollution which threaten their survival, many species in the state are struggling to survive.

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is responsible for the protection and conservation of all wildlife in Virginia, but we receive no state tax dollars, and we need your help to do our job. Help us fund critical research and management programs for the state's nongame and endangered species by contributing to our Nongame Wildlife Fund, which is supported by voluntary contributions made through our state tax checkoff program and direct giving.

This year, please make a donation on your state income tax form or simply send in your tax-deductible check (made payable to the Treasurer of Virginia) to: Virginia Nongame Wildlife Fund-VW, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.



Swainson's thrush and trillium, photo by Rob and Melissa Simpson

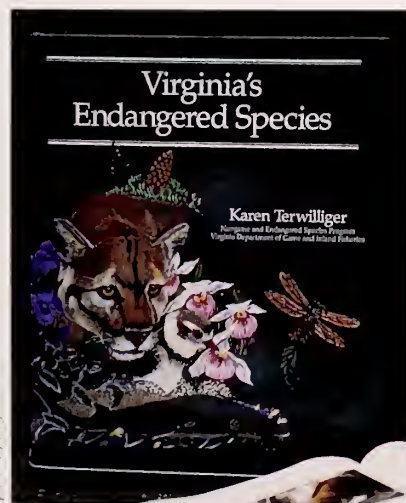


photo by Ron Edwards



Resource Guide Available On Virginia's Endangered Species

Order the only comprehensive resource guide on Virginia's Endangered Species for \$32.94 (softcover) or \$59.95 (hardcover). This 675-page guide identifies and describes more than 250 rare and endangered plants and animals in Virginia. Produced by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and other state natural resource agencies, this book documents the latest scientific information on Virginia's endangered species, information which is available in no other publication, anywhere.

Send your check plus 4.5 percent sales tax and \$3.00 ship and handling charges to: McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company, P.O. Box 10308, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0308. Phone: (703) 951-9465.

To order a Virginia's Endangered Species poster featuring the cover illustration on the book (left), please send a check for \$8 (made payable to: Treasurer of Virginia) to: VA Endangered Species Poster Offer, Attn: Diane Davis, VDGIF, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

Preserving in bronze what we're losing in the wild

An Endangered Species Series by Turner Sculpture

Capturing the essence of Virginia's endangered species in bronze, David Turner of Turner Sculpture has just completed the second in his limited edition series to raise funds for Virginia's Nongame and Endangered Species Program.

This time, David has turned his artist's eye toward one of Virginia's rarest mammals, the Northern flying squirrel. An elusive, elf-like spirit of our mountaintop spruce forests, this tiny squirrel weighs no more than five ounces and is known only to three locations in Virginia. Strictly nocturnal, it emerges from its nest of shredded bark, lichens, and moss once darkness has fallen and glides silently from tree to tree, its outstretched feet unfurling the parachute-like flaps of skin attached to each wrist and ankle.

Here, David Turner's 7" high sculpture of a Northern flying squirrel (photo approximates actual size) is poised for flight on an old-growth snag covered with the lichens and bracket fungus which make up a large part of its diet.

Like the bronze sculpture of the Bewick's wren also featured on this page (less than 100 are left for sale), a limited edition of 200 Northern flying squirrels will be cast and sold solely to benefit Virginia's Nongame and Endangered Species Program, the program responsible for the management and protection of all the Commonwealth's rare and endangered wildlife. The money raised from the sale of these two sculptures will provide the program with over 1/10th of its present operating budget.

Each sculpture has a purchase price of \$325. Turner Sculpture will receive \$175 to cover their production costs, while the remaining \$150 will be sent to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as your contribution to Virginia's Nongame and Endangered Species Fund. A tax advisor should be consulted regarding the personal tax deductibility of this contribution. Each piece sold will include a certificate of origin and a letter confirming your contribution to the future of Virginia's wildlife.

You may order either the Northern flying squirrel or the Bewick's wren by sending a \$325 check for each signed and numbered sculpture to: Turner Sculpture, Box 128, Onley VA 23418. For credit card orders, call: 804/787-2818. **Note:** If you have already purchased a Bewick's wren and would like the same limited edition number in the Northern flying squirrel edition, please send in your order as soon as possible.



Bewick's wren (height: 12 inches) by David Turner. Available for \$325.



TURNER
SCULPTURE

